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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DPRK NUCLEAR TEST

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus on October 12 on the role of Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou in dealing with the high-profile parade and siege of the Presidential Office on Double Ten National Day, which was launched by former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's "Oust Bian" campaign; on the second attempt in the Legislative Yuan to recall President Chen Shui-bian; and on a Taipei District Court ruling demanding that an AIDS shelter in Taipei move out of the community. The pro-status quo "China Times" front-paged its latest survey, which showed that 54 percent of those polled believe that the "Oust Bian" campaign should come to an end, while 32 percent insisted that it should persist.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "China Times" opinion piece analyzed the possible negative consequences for China and Taiwan in the wake of North Korea's nuclear test. End summary.

"North Korea's Nuclear Test Unfavorable for Both Sides [of the Taiwan Strait]"

Chang Kuo-cheng, a Ph. D. candidate in Political Science at Australia's University of New South Wales, opined in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (10/12):

"... For the Chinese side, the nuclear test in North Korea has again demonstrated that Beijing has a very limited influence on Pyongyang, because it is a well-known fact that China is opposed to North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons. The nuclear test also indicated that the Six-Party Talks are totally ineffective, and that the chances are slim for the Six-Party Talks to continue in the future. It is in China's fundamental interest to promote multilateral rather than bilateral consultations, as it will be difficult for China to manipulate in between if Pyongyang negotiates directly with Washington and Tokyo. Likewise, no one can guarantee that Pyongyang will not reach an agreement with the United States and Japan, which will endanger China's interests.

"The collapse of the Six-Party Talks showed that the first attempt at collective security in this region has been a total failure, and it has, without a doubt, proved in one way or another that bilateral military alliances such as the U.S.-Japan security treaty are the real guarantee for regional security. In the future, the United States will have a more powerful strategic say in this region, and Japan and South Korea will surely be more interested in consolidating their strategic alliances with the United States and working in line with the United States' strategic guidance. The second disadvantage of Pyongyang's nuclear test for China is that the move will naturally prompt Japan to strengthen its construction of a missile defense system. This is something that China dislikes and has opposed for a long time. ...

"As for Taiwan, even though Pyongyang's nuclear test has damaged China's position in the eyes of the United States and Japan, Beijing's 'loss' cannot be transformed into 'gains' for Taiwan,

because Taiwan cannot affect Pyongyang's behavior, either. Besides, Washington will not punish Beijing right now simply because the latter has no influence over Pyongyang, as it would not help the situation.

"By comparison, Washington previously could maintain a vague position with regard to whether it should take the initiative in using force to extract Pyongyang's nuclear weapons, since Pyongyang had not revealed whether it possessed nuclear weapons. Beijing's importance was limited then, since Washington was not in a hurry to take action. But now everything is clearly laid out in the sun, and the whole world is watching whether the United States will take military action [against Pyongyang]. Whether Beijing will keep a hands-off attitude or provide certain assistance to the United States due to its geographical advantage and long-time exchanges with North Korea (for example providing Washington with the information it needs, such as Pyongyang's military deployment and relevant facilities) will have a critical influence on the success of the [U.S.] military action. Should this be the case, Taiwan's interests will likely be sacrificed again. ..."

YOUNG